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SCYLD SCEFING AND HUCK FINN

The instance of divination by shield, sheaf, and candle cited by Chadwick (*Origin of the English Nation*, 278) from the Chronicle of Abingdon in support of his theory that the Scyld story is a mythologizing of the rites of an agricultural cult (a theory supported and re-enforced by Olrik, *Danmarks Heltedigtning* II, 250 ff.) had its analog in Missouri two generations ago, if we may trust the chronicler of *Tom Sawyer*, who specifically vouches in his preface for the authenticity of the folk-lore in the book. When the boys on the island realize that the firing of the gun on the ferry-boat is intended to bring their bodies—for they are believed to be drowned—to the surface, Huck Finn remarks: "They done that last summer, when Bill Turner got drowned; they shoot a cannon over the water, and that makes him come to the top. Yes, and they take loaves of bread and put quicksilver in 'em and set 'em afloat, and wherever there's anything that's drowned, they'll float right there and stop." Tom expresses the belief that it is not in the bread but in "what they say over it before they start it out" that the magic efficacy lies; but he is probably wrong. It is precisely the bread, the staff of life, the modern representative of the medieval sheaf, by which the divination is wrought. The quicksilver in place of the candle seems to be a case of metallurgy displacing medieval devotion.

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BRIEF MENTION

The Well of English, and the Bucket. By Burgess Johnson (Boston, Little, Brown, & Co., 1917). The title of this book is also the title of its first chapter, which is in violation of an obviously fundamental requirement of a good title in each case. The comprehensive title of a treatise cannot logically also be descriptive of a properly marked division of the discussion, and, *vice versa*, a part should not by its name restrict the meaning of the whole. There are six more chapters: Grammar and the Bane of Boyhood; Impression and Expression; Essaying an Essay; The Right not to Laugh; The Every-Day Profanity of Our Best People; Ethics of the Pen;—head-lines these that would not discredit an alert journalist.

Mr. Johnson first attempts an assessment of the responsibility, divided between the schools and the colleges, for the too general failure to train the successive generations of students in the approved use of English. "The college throws the burden for this weakness